AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please add Claims 8-15.

1 (original): A positive resist composition that is used in a resist pattern formation method comprising a step, within a lithography process, for substituting a liquid remaining on a substrate following alkali developing with a critical drying liquid, and then drying said critical drying liquid by causing passage through a critical state, wherein said positive resist composition comprises a resin component (A), which has an alkali-soluble unit content of less than 20 mol%, contains an acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting group, and displays increased alkali solubility under action of acid, an acid generator component (B) that generates acid on exposure, and an organic solvent (C) for dissolving said components (A) and (B), and said component (A) comprises a structural unit (a1) containing an acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting group, a structural unit (a2) containing a lactone unit, and a structural unit (a3) containing a polycyclic group with an alcoholic hydroxyl group.

2 (original): A positive resist composition according to claim 1, wherein said alkali-soluble unit is at least one unit selected from a group consisting of structural units containing a phenolic hydroxyl group, and structural units containing a carboxyl group.

3 (original): A positive resist composition according to claim 1, wherein quantities of said structural units (a1) to (a3) within said component (A) are from 20 to 60 mol% for said (a1), from 20 to 60 mol% for said (a2), and from 5 to 50 mol% for said (a3), and said alkali-soluble unit content is zero.

4 (original): A positive resist composition according to claim 1, wherein said component (A) further comprises a structural unit (a4) containing a polycyclic group that differs from said acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting group, said lactone unit, and said polycyclic group with an alcoholic hydroxyl group.

5 (original): A positive resist composition according to claim 4, wherein quantities of said structural units (a1) to (a4) within said component (A) are from 20 to 60 mol% for said (a1), from 20 to 60 mol% for said (a2), from 5 to 50 mol% for said (a3), and from 1 to 30 mol% for said (a4), and said alkali-soluble unit content is zero.

6 (original): A positive resist composition according to claim 1, wherein said component (B) is an onium salt with a fluorinated alkylsulfonate ion as an anion.

7 (original): A positive resist composition according to claim 1, further comprising a secondary or tertiary lower aliphatic amine (D) in a quantity within a range from 0.01 to 2.0% by weight relative to said component (A).

8 (new): A positive resist composition comprising:

a resin component (A) that displays increased alkali solubility under action of acid, comprising:

a structural unit (a1) containing an acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting group,

a structural unit (a2) containing a lactone unit,

a structural unit (a3) containing a polycyclic group with an alcoholic hydroxyl group, and

an alkali-soluble unit of less than 20 mol%;

an acid generator component (B) that generates acid on exposure; and

an organic solvent (C) for dissolving said components (A) and (B).

9 (new): The positive resist composition according to claim 8, wherein said alkali-soluble unit includes at least one unit selected from a group consisting of structural units containing a phenolic hydroxyl group, and structural units containing a carboxyl group, but does not include alcoholic hydroxyl groups.

10 (new): The positive resist composition according to claim 8, wherein the structural units (a1), (a2), and (a3) are contained in the component (A) in an amount of from 20-60 mol%, from 20-60 mol%, and from 5-50 mol%, respectively, and no alkali-soluble unit is contained.

11 (new): The positive resist composition according to claim 10, wherein the component (A) further comprises 1-30 mol% of a structural unit (a4) containing a polycyclic group that differs from the acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting group, the lactone unit, and the polycyclic group with an alcoholic hydroxyl group.

12 (new): The positive resist composition according to claim 8, wherein the acid dissociable, dissolution inhibiting group of the structural unit (a1) is a group which forms a cyclic or chain-like tertiary alkyl ester with the carboxyl group of (meth)acrylic acid or the hydroxyl group of hydroxystyrene; a tertiary alkoxycarbonyl group; or a chain-like alkoxyalkyl group.

13 (new): The positive resist composition according to claim 8, wherein the component (B) is an onium salt with a fluorinated alkylsulfonate ion as an anion.

14 (new): The positive resist composition according to claim 13, wherein the component (B) is contained in a range of from 0.5 to 30 parts by weight per 100 parts of the component (A).

15 (new): A method of forming a resist pattern comprising a lithography process comprising:

forming and exposing a resist layer on a substrate using the resist pattern composition of claim 8;

conducting alkali developing of the exposed resist layer to form a resist pattern;

substituting a solution remaining on the substrate with a critical drying liquid; and

drying the critical drying liquid through its critical state.